







ARISTOPHANES

THE FROGS

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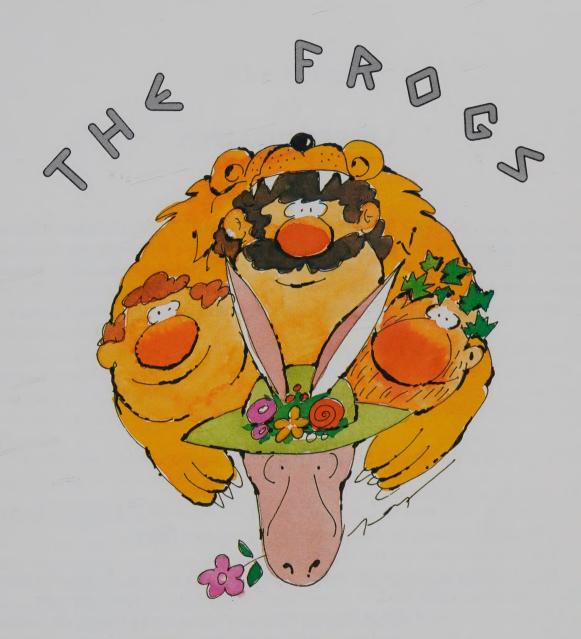
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ARISTOPHANES

information press

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In this charmy book, we will try to bring you in touch with Aristophanes and especially with one of his labours "The Frogs". Aristophanes was one of the most comedian poets in all world. He loved very much the peace, justice and the truth.

We still, nowadays, are being taught very many things by his labours.

About the Labour

Dionysus, Xanthius and the donkey set off and went to Herculus house. They needed his help, so that arrived at the land of frogs.

The land of frogs was the Hades.

There, many people were living. Aescylus, Sophocles, Euripides were the greatest and most famous of all poets, living with all these people.

Dionysus was the God of theatre who was loving, very much, the poets. For this reason, he decided to go with his fellows, bringing back, again, to Athens, the poets.

However, on their way to the land of frogs, the three friends of ours met different obstacles and went on enough comical situations.

They managed, beyond all these to arrive at the land of frogs and bring back to Athens, the best poet.

The Frogs by Aristophanes

Hercules was the most famous hero of Ancient Greece.

He began his great labours when he was still a baby. He had been on many long journeys and come to know many countries and people. But the long journeys had tired him out and he decided to settle down in one place for ever. He built a small house in Tirintha where he took up permanent residency.

Dionysus was the god of wine and theatre. Xanthius was the god's good servant and the donkey was their closest friend. But the donkey had the irrasible habit of constantly grumbling and complaining about everything.

One day Dionysus, Xanthius and the donkey set off to find Hercules at Tirintha.

It was very early in the morning and the three friends started to shout very loudly so as to wake the sleeping Hercules.

"Hercules! Hercules! Wake up, it's important!" Dionysus shouted at the top of his voice.

"Wake up! We need you!" Xanthius shouted equally loud. But there was no answer. Hercules was sound asleep.

The little donkey thought long and hard and decided that perhaps it would be better if they shouted a little louder.

"He is fast asleep! Shout louder!" he advised them.

Whereupon Dionysus shouted even louder.

"Wake uppppp! It's really important! Hercules!"

"We need you!" Xanthius chimed in.

The three friends suddenly stopped shouting. The front door had opened and a very grumpy Hercules stood before them.

They had gotten him up really early and he looked a little angry.

"What are you doing at my front doorstep at this time of the morning?" Hercules asked in curiosity as soon as he laid eyes upon them.

- "We have great need of you." Dionysus said.
- "We need your help, actually." Xanthius' voice was heard to say.
- "What can I do to help you?" Hercules asked.
- "We would like you to show us the way to the land of the frogs." Dionysus said.

"We know that you have travelled there before." Xanthius said. It was at that moment that Hercules noticed what Dionysus was wearing.



"Why are you dressed like me? Hercules laughingly asked Dionysus.

Dionysus was taken aback. He didn't know what exactly to say.

Xanthius however turned and said: "It's best if we explain it to him, so he can understand."

They all sat down in front of Hercules' home. The little donkey stood off to one side and watched them intently.

Dionysus and Xanthius began to explain to Hercules how they came to be at his home so early in the morning.

It was a long story.

A long time ago, people often went to the theatre to be entertained. All the hard work that the theatre required was carried out by the poets. They wrote all that the actors said on stage and they even showed the actors how they were supposed to say their lines. It was a difficult job, but the people loved the poets, for they knew that the poets were the life of the theatre.

Aescylus, Sophocles and Euripides were the greatest and most famous of all poets.



Aristophanes was also famous but he wrote mostly comedies.

One day the poets became very angry with the Athenians and they left for the land of the frogs.

The frogs were very polite and they loved the poets. They had given the poets great positions. In the theatre there were the thrones reserved for their kings and queens. Directly above these thrones the frogs had set up a throne for the greatest poet. This was how much the frogs loved and cared for the poets!

Dionysus, who was the god of the theatre, saw that Athens had no poets and was greatly saddened. Thus he had decided that he would go and find the poets and bring them back. He was not happy that they lived in the land of the frogs.

Dionysus however did not know the way there, but he knew that Hercules had once travelled to the land of the frogs. And so he set off for the home of Hercules so that the hero could tell him where it was. But he was still not satisfied with his arrangements and so he had dressed himself up to look like Hercules. He wore a lion skin drapped over his shoulders and he held a club in one hand. Dressed like Hercules, the frogs would welcome him among them more easily.

When Hercules heard the whole story he burst out laughing and told them how they could reach the land of the frogs. He was no longer angry that they had woken him up so early since it concerned the poets.

When Hercules had finished explaining to them how they could reach the frogs he asked if they had all understood.

"We understand perfectly!" Dionysus said quickly, and Xanthius added politely "We thank you for helping us!".

"Have a good trip!". Hercules cried out. "I shall go back to sleep because I'm very tired." and with that Hercules went back into his house and shut the door.

Dionysus and Xanthius prepared to leave for the land of the frogs. But the little donkey was thoughtful.

"What business do I have going with them? After all they're the ones who like travelling."

While Dionysus, Xanthius and the little donkey walked along the road, four young men and a woman appeared before them quite suddenly.

"Where are you bound for?". Dionysus asked them.

"We're going to the land of the frogs. We've heard that there's a wonderful inn there." one of the four young men replied.

"Only this woman knows the way there." the other explained.

"The land of the frogs is very far away and I would never have undertaken such a journey alone. I was most fortunate to find these four young men who like to travel to distant places. This way I will be able to visit this far off land myself." the woman added with great pleasure.

"Let's quickly forrow them! Since this woman knows the way there we won't have any difficulty in reaching our destination." Dionysus whispered.

"We mustn't forget our little donkey!" Xanthius reminded Dionysus.

"Why should I go! After all I'm not the one whose so bent on seeing the land of the frogs!" the little donkey grumbled in complaint.

By the time Dionysus, Xanthius and the little donkey reached the land of the frogs they were utterly exhausted. They had lost the four young men and the woman as well since they couldn't keep up with their fast pace.

From a distance they could see the large lake. It was at this lake that the border of the land of the frogs lay. What worried our three friends at that point was how they could manage to cross over the lake. Just as they were trying to figure out how they could do this a voice was heard in the distance.

"I am the boatman for anyone whose interesting in going to the land of the frogs!"

Dionysus approached him and said: "We'd like to go across. Can you take us?"

The boatman turned and looked at Dionysus, Xanthius and the little donkey.

"With great pleasure! But I don't want any animals on my boat!"

At this the little donkey lost his temper and starting to complain loudly, but Dionysus soon found a way around the problem.

"Xanthius, you and the little donkey will skirt around the lake on foot."

At this Xanthius became angry and murmured under his breath.

"I think Dionysus is pulling our legs! Come on little donkey we'd better start!"

The little donkey, too, was not pleased at all.

"Oh, I see! He gets to go across in the comfort of the boat while we have to walk!"

And since the little donkey had no other choice he followed Xanthius.

As soon as they were out of sight Dionysus turned and asked the boatman:

"Can I get into the boat?"

"You have to pay first." the boatman replied.

Dionysus quickly paid the boatman and climbed aboard.

"Here are the oars!" he heard the boatman tell him.

"Wait a minute! If I'm the one whose going to row what are you going to do?"

"I'm tired of rowing all the time!" the boatman replied and since Dionysus had no other choice he took up the oars.

Within a few moments his whole body ached. The lion skin he wore was hot and it bothered him. His hands hurt and he couldn't flex his fingers. A while later the shores of the land of the frogs came into sight. The scene that Dionysus beheld was enchanting. There were so many frogs leaping about!

The voices of the frogs could be heard all around.

"Gribbit! Gribbit! Kouax! Kouax! Gribbit! Kouax, Kouax!"

The voices never stopped.

A frog approached Dionysus and said:

"Welcome to our land. I'm sure you'll really like it here because everything is so beautiful."

More frogs gathered around Dionysus and they all started to shout: "Gribbit! Gribbit!"



This was their way of welcoming him.

"Every day we play in the water. Gribbit!"

"We like to dive into the water and splash about" Kouax!"

Dionysus looked at the frogs. The boatman became angry.

"Don't doddle foreigner! Row faster so that we can reach the shore!"

"How enchanting this place is!" Dionysus replied in awe.

And the frogs continued to shout:

"Gribbit! Gribbit! Kouax! Kouax!"

At long last the boat reached the shore of the land of the frogs. Xanthius and the little donkey had arrived much earlier and were waiting for Dionysus. Poor Dionysus! He bitterly regretted that he had gone by boat for he was exhausted. The boatman didn't help him row at all.

As soon as Dionysus stepped on land he saw before him a large and beautiful building with a large sign on its front which read "Inn". A mouthwatering smell was coming from its kitchen.

Dionysus took Xanthius to one side.

"Xanthius, here in the land of the frogs I want you to be very careful!"



he whispered to him confidentially.

"What do you want me to do?" Xanthius asked.

"Don't call me by my real name. Don't forget that I'm supposed to be Hercules."

"Rest easy Dionysus!" Xanthius replied.

The little donkey overheard this and thought

"I wonder if all these clever machinations will have a good end."

A great many frogs were walking beside the little donkey.

"Come and sleep at our inn." one said.

"It's so clean and comfortable!" another added.

At that moment Xanthius and Dionysus approached the little donkey. Everything looked so beautiful! Just as our three friends were about to enter the inn, Aeakos approached them. Aeakos was the chief guard of the land of the frogs.

Our friends had to receive this important person's permission to stay first. No one could stay in the land of the frogs if they were not issued a permit from the chief guard.

"Who are you and what do you seek in the land of the frogs?" he asked them.

The first to answer was Xanthius.

"My name is Xanthius and I'm from Athens!"

The little donkey continued.

"I am a little donkey and come from Athens as well!"

Dionysus stood silently for he was reluctant to answer.

Aeakos seeing this turned and asked Xanthius:

"And who is he?"

"He is Dion..." Xanthius was about to finish his sentence quite mindless of what he was saying. The little donkey realised that Xanthius was about to put his foot in his mouth and interrupted him.

"Stop!" the little donkey shouted.

Dionysus realised that he had to say something or else he would give his identity away.

"I am Hercules! The famous hero!" he said puffing his chest out.

Whereupon Aeakos turned a baleful eye upon him and shouted:

"You're Hercules? So you're the one who stole our dog Cerberus. Just wait and see what's going to happen to you now! I'll call the guards and then off with you to prison!"

Aeakos turned and left quickly.

Poor Dionysus was filled with fear. His whole body shook and his face

was pale.

Xanthius stood rooted to the ground quite speechless while the donkey nodded his head in a knowing way.

It was at that moment that Dionysus was struck with an idea.

"Xanthius, do you believe that we have a deep and longlasting friendship?".

"Of course!" Xanthius replied.

"Then you take the lion skin and club and you can be Hercules!"

Silly Xanthius, without a second thought agreed.

The little donkey however who was always in the habit of thinking everything over carefully murmured.

"I wonder why Xanthius agreed so quickly. What's going to happen now?".

Dionysus calmed down and he was no longer afraid.

In a flash he had taken off the lion skin and given it to Xanthius who put it on in no time. He quickly handed Xanthius the club. Just at that moment a beautiful young girl, Therapaina, who was the frog queen's closest friend turned a corner and came into view.

She stopped in front of them and after looking intently at each one for a long time, asked:

Which of you three is Hercules?

Dionysus quickly pointed to Xanthius and said:

"He's Hercules!" Therapaina, the frog queen's closest friend, turned and smiled at him.

"Welcome to our land Hercules! The king and queen will be greatly pleased when they hear that you are in the land of the frogs. For now rest and I shall prepare a great feast to honour your arrival."

"Thank you very much." Xanthius replied politely.

Therapaina looked at him again and after smiling sweetly turned and left.

Here they were waiting for Xanthius, who wore the clothes of Hercules, to be marched off to prison, only to find out that he was to attend a banquet which would be held in his honour.

How fortunate Xanthius was!

Dionysus was ready to burst at the seams he was so jealous!

"Tell me Xanthius, do you believe we have a deep and long lasting friendship?"

"Of course!" Xanthius replied, wondering why Dionysus was asking him this again.





"Then give me Hercules' clothes back!"

"If you want them, here they are!" Xanthius replied again quickly and once again without giving the matter a second thought took off the lion skin and laid down the club.

Once again the donkey shook his head and thought:

"I wonder why Xanthius consented to Dionysus' request so quickly! Hmmm, I'm curious to see what's going to happen now."

Once again Dionysus put on the lion skin and took up the club.

The frogs jumped about them in a circle.

"Gribbit Gribbit! Kouax Kouax!"

"Rest comfortably at our inn!"

"Have a nice time in the land of the frogs."

Mouth watering smells continued to come from the kitchen.

Our three friends were about to enter. As they approached the main entrance two women came out of the inn.

The first woman was the inn keeper and the other, her friend, the cook whose name was Plathani.

As soon as Dionysus saw them, he thought they had come out to receive him.

The inn keeper turned to her friend and cried out:

"Plathani! Isn't that Hercules?"

"Yes! So it is!" the cook replied and continued,

"The last time he was here he stole all our bread!"

"What does he want now?" the inn keeper asked in exasperation.

"Don't tell me he wants to stay here!"

"He should be thrown into prison!" Plathani cried out.

"He should be beaten for eating bread which is not his own!" the inn keeper cried out in rage.

"Let's call Aeakos and his soldiers right away so that they can throw him into prison!"

And the two women agreed that this was what they should do.

Dionysus once again shook with fear. Once again the little donkey shook his head in a knowing way. Xanthius was gasping with supressed laughter. He was having difficulty trying not to show his mirth.

A bright idea popped into Dionysus' head.

"Xanthius, do you believe we have a deep and long lasting friendship?"

"No!" Xanthius shot out quickly having made up his mind no to do everything Dionysus asked him to.

He didn't like Dionysus' sly ways.

The little donkey looked up at Dionysus thoughtfully.

"No that Aeakos and his soldiers arrive, Dionysus is sure to get a good beating. He deserves it! Serves him right impersonating someone."

Dionysus was racking his brains trying to think of all his available options. He was confused. Of one thing though he was certain: he did not want to go to prison.

He looked at Xanthius and then at the little donkey.

He had the oddest notion that both of them were making fun of him. Looking at the little donkey, another bright idea popped into his head.

"Xanthius! I've got it! We'll dress the little donkey up as Hercules!"

"Agreed!" Xanthius was heard to say, as he usually did, without a second thought to what was being suggested.

The little donkey was not inclined to agree with them.

He immediately started to shout:

Don't bother agreeing because I won't hear of it! I don't want to dress up as Hercules. But despite the fuss the donkey made, he could not stop them.

Dionysus and Xanthius managed to dress the little donkey in Hercules' clothes.

No sooner had they finished than Aeakos arrived with two heavily armed soldiers in tow.

Aeakos looked around carefully. As soon as he saw the little donkey he shouted:

"There's Hercules! Quickly seize him and bring him along!"

"Come along Hercules!"

One of the two soldiers cried out. "Are you in for a good beating!" the other soldier added.

The little donkey shook off Hercules' clothes and threw down the club.

"I'm not Hercules! I'm just a little donkey!"

Aeakos looked around him bewildered.

"If you're not Hercules then who is?"

Dionysus pointed to Xanthius while Xanthius pointed to Dionysus.

"He's Hercules! He's the one your looking for!" they both cried out in unison.

Aeokos turned to the soldiers.

"Beat them both until they tell us the truth!" he ordered.

One soldier seized Dionysus while the other took hold of Xanthius. Both soldiers threatened that they would be beaten very badly.

"A beating you've never seen the likes of!" they both cried in glee.

There was not doubt that they would have gotten a terrible beating if Therapaina had not arrived in the nick of time accompanied by Persephone, the queen of the frogs.

"There, that's the reknown hero, Hercules!" Therapaina cried out.

"That isn't Hercules!" the queen cried out "That's Dionysus!"

"Oh no! So all our preparations were for nothing!" Therapaina said sadly.

"We shall all go to the theatre to celebrate!" Persephone said and continued "Dionysus is an old friend."

The throne of the best poet was also located in the theatre.

The frogs followed them crying out:

"Gribbit! Gribbit! Kouax! Kouax!"

"Let's all go to the theatre for the festival!"

"Quickly! To the theatre!"

"Kouax! Gribbit!"



Our three friends were spared the beating by Persephone's timely arrival.

Let us once again remember the reason why Dionysus, Xanthius and the little donkey came to the land of the frogs.

Their purpose was to go there and bring back the best poet to Athens.



And here was the greatest dilemma.

Who was truly the greatest poet?

All the frogs cried out in unison that the best poet was without doubt Aescylus. It was Aescylus who sat in the throne of the best poet.

But let us see if the rest of the poets agreed with this choice.

Euripides disagreed, but Sophocles did not. As soon as Euripides saw the crowd entering the theatre to celebrate the festival, he did his best to hinder Aescylus from taking his seat on the throne of the greatest poet.

As soon as Aescylus approached the throne of the greatest poet he heard Euripides' voice crying out:

"I am the greatest poet so don't bother sitting on the throne."

Aescylus became angry and shouted:

"You know very well that I'm the greatest poet!"

At that moment Pluto, the king of the land of the frogs came near them and said loudly:

"Stop this bickering! We shall hold a contest to determine who the greatest poet is!"

Quite suddenly Euripides and Aescylus started to hurl insults at one another. "You're useless!" "You're an idiot!"

At that point Pluto lost his temper and shouted:

"Stop this quarreling at once! We're more interested in hearing your poetry than your opinions of each other!"

Therapaina truly loved poetry.

"Oh yes! Please begin at once!" she said.

But the contest proved to difficult for the people to judge who the greatest poet was. Thus it was decided that each poet would recite his own verses and the other poets would correct all the errors. And that was what happened.

Euripides was the first to start. Bursting with pride, he was heard to say:

"Oh little lamb, so white and fat...!"

No sooner had he started than the voice of Aescylus was heard:

"Wrong! Wrong! All wrong!"

"It is not!" Euripides screeched in a fit.

"If you believed you've detected an error then please let the rest of us know what the error is!" Euripides said angrily. Aescylus stood up and explained:

"It's obvious why it's all wrong! There is no such thing as a white lamb! All lambs vary in the colour of their wool!"

"That's not true!" Euripides shouted back.



"Furthermore, lambs are not fat when they are young!" Aescylus added.

"A lie!" Euripides bellowed.

"Enough!" Pluto interrupted.

"Euripides, recite to us another poem."

"No matter which poem he recites and no matter how hard he tries I will always find something wrong with it!" Trust my little black lantern to ruin all his poems!" said Aescylus and sat down obviously pleased with himself.

"We are listening!" Persephone said who was impatiently waiting to hear a new poem.

Everyone in the theatre was wondering how a poem could be ruined by a black lantern. Only a poet such as Aescylus could do something like that.

Euripides once again puffed his chest out with pride and began:

"A beautiful butterfly! Such a beautiful butterfly...!"

Aescylus was heard to say:

"With a black lantern!"

"A beautiful butterfly with a black lantern?"

What Aescylus had just said ruined the Euripides' poem completely.

Euripides ignored the interruption and continued:

"A beautiful butterfly...!"

And once again Aescylus interrupted him:

"...With a black lantern!"

"A beautiful butterfly with large wings...!"

Euripides continued in a loud and angry voice.

And yet once more Aescylus shot out:

"...and a black lantern on the large wings."

In the end the poem was ruined. Aescylus was the one who ruined the poem with the use of a black lantern.

The king of the land of the frogs ordered that a large scale be brought to him.

Xanthius ran off and immediately returned with one.

Pluto then said to the poets:

"Each of you take a deep breath and say something really splendid! A word which carries great weight! They would see who the greatest poet was for the scales would tip in the poet's direction.

Once again Euripides began first. This time though he was very angry.

"There once was a little ship...! No! No! it was a big ship! Enormous!"

Euripides was certain that Aescylus would not be able to find another word which carried as much weight as a ship.

But Aescylus began singing:

"What is the name, tell me what is the name of the river..."

The scale immediately tipped in the direction of Aescylus and everyone started to applaud with joy.

"Aescylus is the greatest poet and he is the one who shall come with us to Athens" the voice of Xanthius was heard to say.

Dionysus agreed with him:

"Let us begin our return journey at once!"

Aescylus was prepared to go with them but suddenly he paused.

Everyone had risen to their feet to bid them farewell.

A thought had crossed Aescylus' mind. Now that he was leaving who would sit on his throne until he returned to the land of the frogs? He did not want Euripides to sit on it!

As Aescylus was lost in thought his good friend Sophocles came up to him and said:

"Aescylus, rest easy! I shall guard your throne until you return" and with those words he sat on the throne.

Euripides was enraged as he stood there holding the scales in one hand while in the other he held a black lantern—given to him by Aescylus.

"Don't fret Euripides! After me and Sophocles you are the greatest poet!" Aescylus consoled him.

Euripides was speechless with rage.

The god of the theatre, Dionysus, took Aescylus by the hand and said:

"It's time for us to go. They're waiting for us back in Athens!"

Pluto rose to his feet and bade them a fond farewell.

"Have a good trip."

The audience rose to its feet crying:

"Have a good journey!"

The frogs together with the audience came to see the foreigner and Aescylus as they left the land of the frogs.

They all hoped that Aescylus would come back to them soon.





Activities

A) QUESTIONS BASED ON THE TEXT

- 1. Who is Dionysus?
- 2. Why did Dionysus dress up like Hercules?
- 3. Who was with him?
- 4. Can you remember the place where Herculus lived?
- 5. Who did our friends meet while they were travelling to the land of the frogs?
- 6. Name the queen of the land of the Frogs.
- 7. Who was the King?
- 8. The last time Herculus visited the land of the frogs he stole two things. What were they?
- 9. Who were the three poets in the story?
- 10. What kind of poems did Aristophanes write?
- 11. Who was proclaimed the greatest poet?
- 12. Who wrote "The Frogs"?

These activities are not based on the text but on ancient Greek mythology, literature and history.

B) 1. Hercules was indeed ancient Greece's most famous hero. He was assigned to undertake twelve labours. Can you list the labours he undertook?

1.	····· 7.	
2.	8.	
3.	9.	
4.	10.	
5.	11.	
	12.	

7. The Bull of Crete 8. The Horses of Diomedes 9. The Dirdle of Hippolyte 10. The caphere of Cerberus 11. The golden apples of Esperides 12. The Cantle of Gieyon 1. The Nemean Lion
2. The Hydra of Lernea
3. The Dees of Ceryneia
4. The Erymanthean Boar
5. The stables of Augeas
6. The Stymphalian Birds

C) Cross Word Puzzle 1

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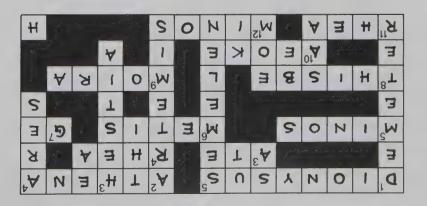
C) Cross Word Puzzle 1

Across

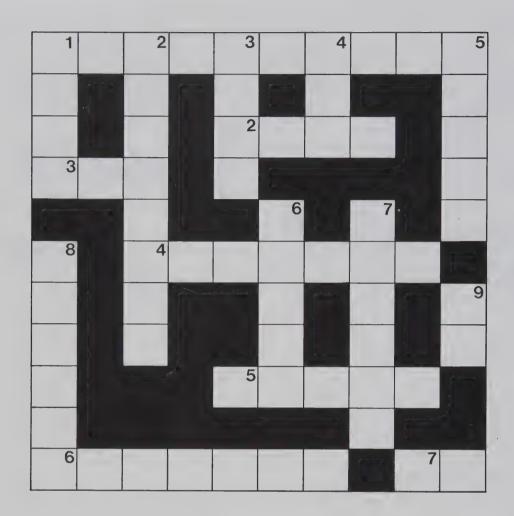
- 1. The god of wine.
- 2. The goddess of wisdom and patron of Athens.
- 3. The daughter of strife and lawlessness. She personifies misguided judgement.
- 4. The mother of Zeus.
- 5. A famous King of Crete.
- 6. A Titaness and the mother of Athena.
- 7. The goddess of the earth in early pre Greek mythology.
- 8. A young girl in Greek mythology who killed herself when she thought her young husband had died.
- 9. The goddess of fate. In modern Greek her name means "fate" or "destiny".
- 10. A King of the Aegean.
- 11. The same as number 4 across.
- 12. The same as number 5 across.

Down

- 1. The goddess of agriculture and mother of Persephone.
- 2. The sister of Apollo and the goddess of the hunt.
- 3. The goddess of the hearth and home.
- 4. The god of war.
- 5. The mother of Dionysus.



D) Cross Word Puzzle 2



D) Cross Word Puzzle 2

Down

- 1. The queen of the gods.
- 2. The god of the sea.
- 3. The god of war.
- 4. Helios was the god of the brightest star in our universe, the
- 5. This woman was Apollo's priestess at the oracle at Delphi and always delivered the oracles. Today her name means someone who is wise.
- 6. The god of lightning and thunder.
- 7. The messanger god.
- 8. The goddess of wisdom and patron of Athens.
- 9. The Greek letter which corresponds to the English letter "P".

Across

- 1. The god of fire.
- 2. The highest volcano in Europe and the home of the Cyclopes, the one eyed giants of Greek mythology.
- 3. The daughter of strife and lawlessness. She personifies misquided judgement.
- 4. The goddess of agriculture and mother of Persephone.
- 5. A Titaness and the mother of Athena.
- 6. The sister of Apollo and goddess of the hunt.
- 7. A priestess of Hera at Argos.

